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For Immediate Release
September 16, 2004

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Sen. Gilbert, Jeff Friedland testify on Reverse 911 legislation

LANSING – Sen. Jud Gilbert, R-Algonac, and Jeff Friedland, emergency management coordinator for St. Clair County, testified before the Senate Technology and Energy Committee Wednesday on the need for a “Reverse 911” telephone system to warn Michigan residents of impending local emergencies.

“This system would be beneficial to every county in Michigan,” Gilbert said. “It would notify residents of potentially life-threatening situations in their area such as terror attacks, tornados or chemical spills.”

Reverse 911 would allow emergency service responders to use telephone numbers to contact residents regarding an imminent danger or crisis that may affect their health, safety or welfare.

A local 911 agency would be able to program the numbers into an automatic dialer that would reach many residents at one time. Several states already have similar notification systems.

“St. Clair County is the busiest corridor for hazardous materials in North America” Friedland said. “When time is crucial in the event of a chemical spill or other natural disaster, this system would provide immediate notification to local residents regarding the situation.”

Senate Bill 1267 would require telecommunications providers to supply all 911 service districts within their coverage areas with telephone number data for each customer in the district. This information would be provided upon the request of local emergency management personnel.

The legislation clearly stipulates that the information is only to be used for emergency purposes and includes criminal penalties for improper use of the provided telephone numbers and other data.

“We look forward to seeing this bill passed and signed,” Gilbert said. “St. Clair County has the technology in place for Reverse 911 but is looking for the necessary state authorization to move forward. This legislation would allow the county to use the system in the event of future chemical spills and other life-threatening emergencies.”

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Editor’s Note: A photo of Sen. Gilbert and Jeff Friedland testifying is available for download on the Senate Majority Photowire at <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/photowire/Index.htm>